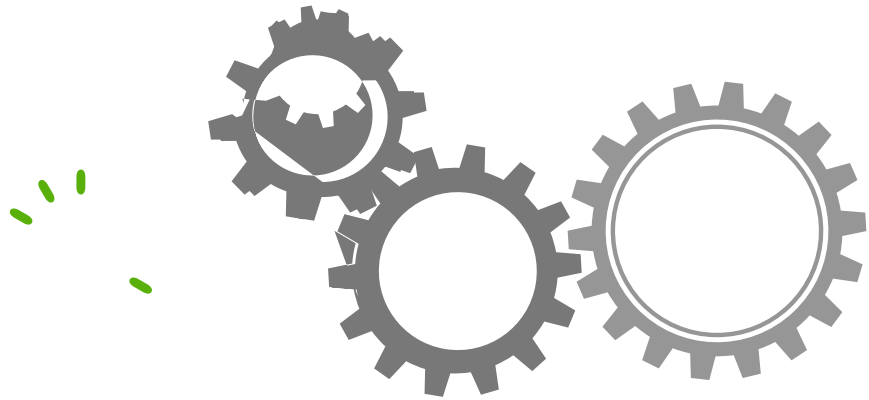


Policy Recommendations for the Incoming Administration



Environmental health is the branch of public health that focuses on the interrelationships between people and their environment, promotes human health and well-being, and fosters healthy and safe communities. As a fundamental component of a comprehensive public health system, environmental health works to advance policies and programs to reduce environmental exposures from air, water, food, and chemicals to protect people and provide communities with healthier surroundings. Environmental health protects the public by tracking environmental exposures, identifying potential links with diseases, and working to remove or control those exposures.

Governmental environmental health services are not a luxury. They are essential to providing the public basic needs, such as safe drinking water, clean air, safe foods, chemical safety, lead poisoning prevention, healthy housing, climate change adaptation, emergency preparedness, and more. Environmental health has long been recognized as being a crucial government function.

Environmental health provides everyone the opportunity to achieve their highest possible level of health at all stages of life, encompassing physical, mental, and social well-being, extending beyond the absence of disease. The following **opportunities for action** support the basic human right to environmental health:

- **PREVENTION:** Enable federal, state, local, and tribal governments to promote resilient, equitable, and healthy communities for all Americans, especially those who are most vulnerable and most at

The next administration should prioritize the reversal of regulatory actions that are harmful to health. Three

The environmental health workforce performs many critical functions during and after an emergency caused by

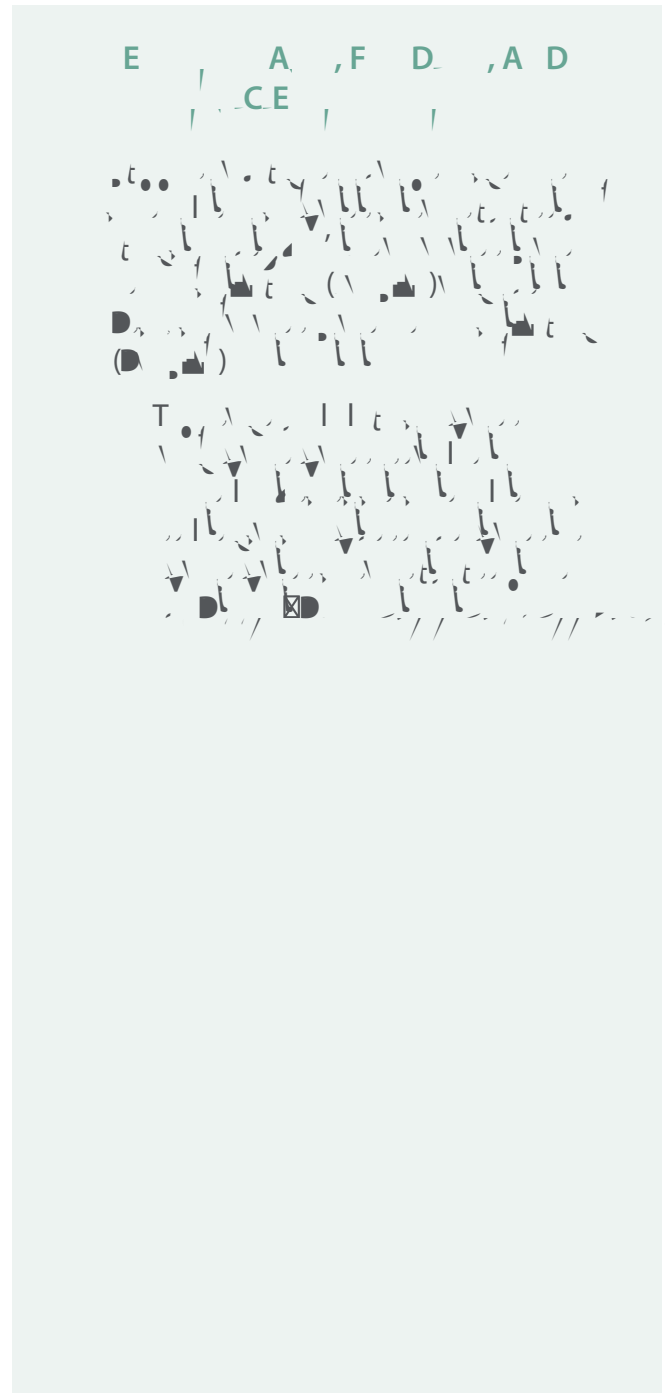
Recommendation 10


- Review, update, and systematically enforce primary drinking water standards.
- **Ensure** the major federal agencies responsible for water quality—EPA, CDC, U.S. Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Department of the Interior—develop a national action plan.
- Ensure that water- and health-related laws, policies, and funding opportunities acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact climate change has on marginalized populations.
- As the pandemic continues, ensure that all people continue to have access to clean, safe drinking water through a moratorium on water shutoffs and assistance with reconnection of service where needed and provide financial support to local governments to offset lost income.
- Provide education to private well owners about the importance of periodic water quality testing and access to a ffordable testing.

As the need for clean water during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, everyone in this country needs access to safe, clean water for drinking and washing. Unfortunately, there remain barriers across the country to such access, in urban, rural, and suburban areas. The administration must take steps to address issues ranging from sources of contamination, including lead pipes and chemical releases, to lack of funding for infrastructure and wastewater treatment.

Safe water is critical to the welfare of individuals, families, businesses, and the U.S. economy. Two out of every five Americans rate their quality of water as poor. Within the next decade, at least 36 states will face water shortages. At the same time, contaminated water is a source of illness and premature death in this country.

About **one in nine U.S. residents** gets their drinking water from a private well. **About a quarter** of the roughly 2,100 private wells sampled by the U.S. Geological Survey between 1991 and 2004 were found to have at least one contaminant exceeding federal maximum contaminant levels for regulated substances or health-based screening levels for unregulated substances. Over the past 45 years, the proportion of outbreaks associated with private water sources **has increased**. Five waterborne illnesses—giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, Legionnaires' disease, otitis externa (inflammation of the ear canal), and non-tuberculous mycobacterial infection—cause an estimated 40,000 hospitalizations each year at a cost of \$970 million. Altogether, **researchers estimate** that up to 900,000 people fall ill and up to 900 die annually from waterborne infectious diseases.



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- Implement and enforce the Clean Air Act, one of the nation's most successful public health laws.
 - Strengthen outdated particulate and ozone standards.

Administrative and congressional actions should focus on preventative measures to repair homes and remove hazards. These actions must include both robust funding of healthy homes programs across the federal government and new regulatory or legislative action, such as:

- Raise standards for conditions in both federally supported housing, including Section 8, and federal mortgage requirements.
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